

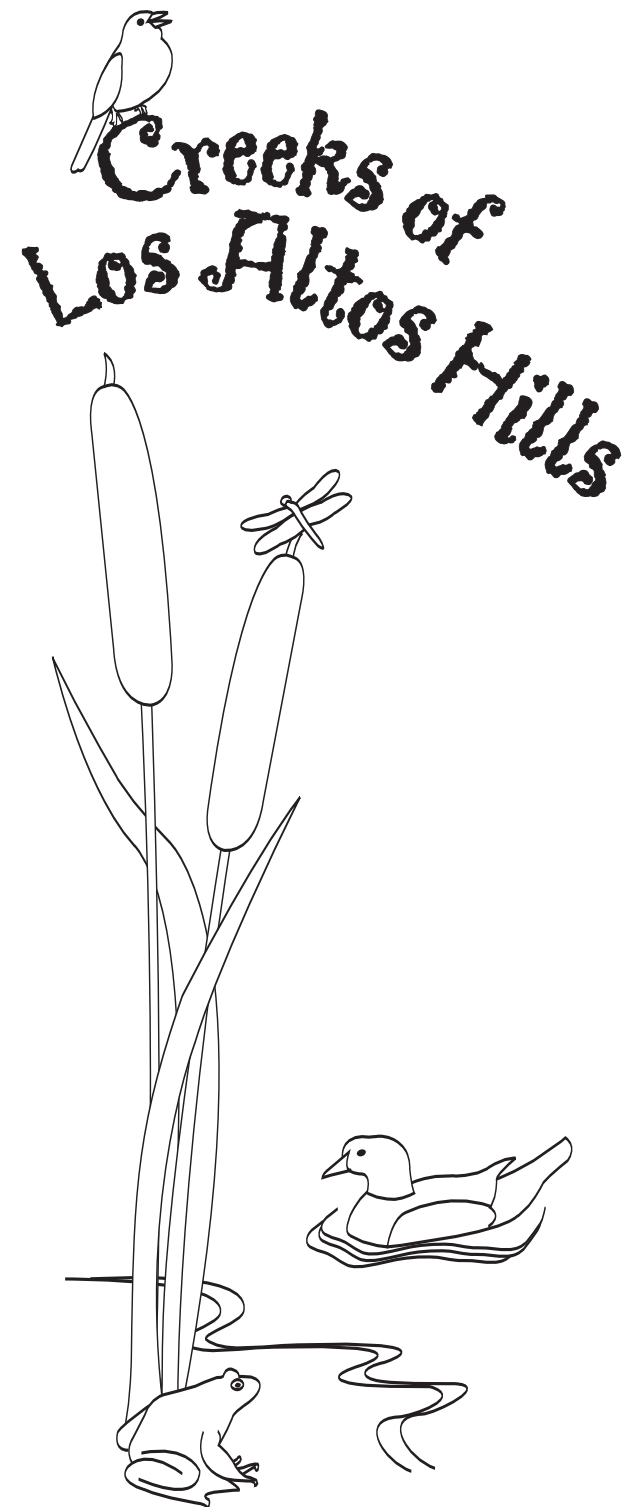
Almost 17 miles of creek run through Los Altos Hills, including twelve named creeks (Adobe, Barron, Deer, Dry, Hale, Loyola, Magdalena, Matadero, Purissima, Permanente, Robleda, and Summerhill Creeks). These creeks and their adjacent riparian buffers perform important ecological functions, including draining storm and flood waters, filtering pollutants, providing habitat and corridors for wildlife, replenishing surface and ground water, and contributing to a host of aesthetic benefits.

Looking at the health of local creeks and streams is becoming increasingly important as development encroaches. Minor changes in the integrity of creeks and riparian areas can have negative impacts far downstream in the regional watershed.

Creeks can become polluted by storm water that flows over paved areas, picking up pollutants, like gasoline, oil, fertilizers and pesticides, and pet and animal waste. The polluted water travels through the storm drain system and into local creeks and on to the Bay.

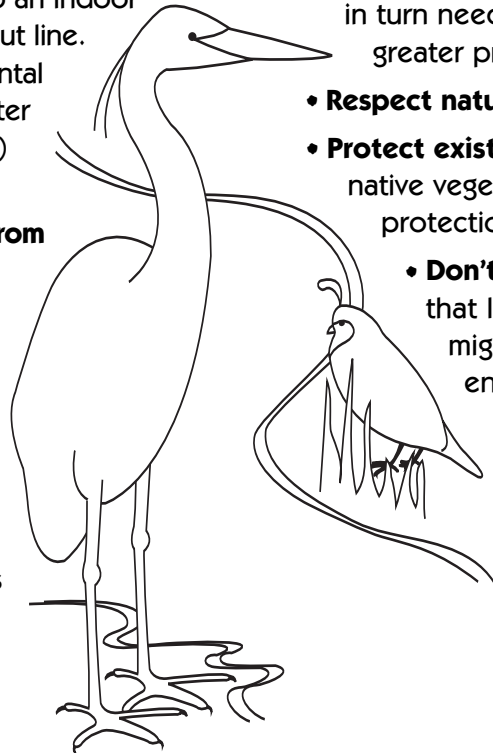
Creek banks can be eroded by removal of vegetation, or by any modification to the banks, and by locating structures too close to the banks. Minimizing erosion is important to preserve the natural resources of the creek environment.

Since the majority of creekside property is privately owned, property owners are responsible for properly managing their riparian areas and streams. However, many creekside owners are unaware of their responsibilities or the consequences of their choices. Los Altos Hills Municipal Code and General Plan specifically protect creeks, streams, natural drainage swales, and other watercourses.



What Can We Do To Improve Creek Health?

- **Never dump anything down a storm drain.** Storm drains lead directly to local creeks. (Remember, only rain should go down a drain!)
- **Recycle used motor oil and other automotive fluids.**
- **Reduce use of pesticides and fertilizers near creeks.** Never use them when rain is forecast.
- **Don't dump or store any materials into a creek or on the banks of a creek.** Even "natural" materials like leaves and pet waste can alter the hydrology and chemistry of the creek, endangering the habitat and adding potentially harmful bacteria to the water.
- **Never drain your swimming pool or spa into the creek.** Drain these into an indoor drain or into the sewer clean-out line. If on septic, contact Environmental Compliance at the Regional Water Quality Control Plant (Palo Alto) for advice, **650-329-2421**.
- **Keep domestic animals away from creek banks.** They can trample the banks or eat the riparian vegetation, leading to erosion problems.
- **Los Altos Hills development ordinances generally require a minimum 25-foot riparian setback from the top of the creek bank.** Creeks and banks should be left in their natural state as much as possible. No grading or structures are



permitted within this setback and only native plants can be planted there. No fences are allowed across any creek or within the riparian set back. If you need help with a creek problem in your neighborhood, contact the Town of Los Altos Hills, **650-941-7222**.

- **Resist the temptation to "correct" any perceived erosion problem yourself.** It is quite natural for a creek to change its bed slightly every rainy season, with either deposition or removal of silt and slight changes in course. Under no circumstances should you try to control erosion yourself by installing any kind of armoring or protective "hardscape." This will merely accelerate a local energy/acceleration imbalance and cause an even greater problem just downstream. This will in turn need "fixing" and trigger an even greater problem and so on.
- **Respect nature. Leave wildlife alone.**
- **Protect existing native vegetation.** Leave native vegetation in place. It is the best protection against erosion.
- **Don't feed the birds.** Waterfowl that live on the creeks are mostly migratory birds. Providing food encourages them to stay in place, interrupting the natural cycle.
- **If you see someone dumping anything into a creek, please call the Santa Clara Valley Water District Illegal Dumping Hotline (24 hours) at 1-888-510-5151.**

If you really do think you have an erosion problem, seek professional advice before attempting any home remedies.

- **Contact the Town of Los Altos Hills Public Works/Engineering Department, 650-941-7222 and the Santa Clara Valley Water District's Community Projects Review Unit, 408-265-2607, ext. 2253** for advice and permit information if you are contemplating making any changes to the creek. Also, be aware that easements may exist along your creek that constrain what you may do there.
- **Creeks are also under the legal jurisdiction of state and federal agencies.** These agencies must be contacted before any work is done in or near a creek. The agencies that may require a permit and must be contacted include:
 - ~ California Department of Fish and Game North Coast District, Warden Greg Grinton, **650-638-0771**; Enforcement—North Coast District, **707-944-5588**
 - ~ California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Brian Wines, **510-622-5680**
 - ~ Army Corps of Engineers
 - ~ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service